

The Twenty-six Righteous Martyrs of the Zographou Monastery who censured the Latin-minded Emperor Michael Paleologus and the Patriarch John Beccus.



**The Twenty-six Righteous Martyrs of the Zographou Monastery
Who Censured the Latin-minded
Emperor Michael Paleologus and the Patriarch John Beccus
Whom the Holy Church Celebrates on September 22.**

✠ September 22

SYNAXARION

On this day the holy Twenty-six Righteous Martyrs of the Monastery of Zographou, who accused the Latin-minded Emperor Michael Paleologus the Eighth, and the Patriarch John Beccus, were perfected in martyrdom when they were burned alive in a tower.

Verses

Fittingly and rightly were the six and twenty
Offered to the Lord a sacrifice by burning.
By their holy intercessions O God, have mercy on us.

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For if simply saying "Hail" is the same as partaking of another's evil deeds, how much more so is the blatant commemoration in the very presence of the divine and dread Mysteries? For if He that is present before us is the Truth Himself, how is it reasonable to suppose that He will accept this great lie, that is, that this man should be esteemed as an Orthodox patriarch among the other Orthodox patriarchs? At the time when the dread Mysteries are being celebrated, shall we play the part of an actor on the stage? And how shall the soul of an Orthodox Christian endure these things and not straightway refrain from communion with the commemorators, and esteem them to be men that make sordid gain of divine things? For from the beginning, the Orthodox Church of God has accepted that the mention of the hierarch's name within the sanctuary meant complete communion with him. For it is written in the exposition of the Divine Liturgy that the celebrant commemorates the name of the bishop, thereby demonstrating submission to a superior, and that he is a communicant with him, and his follower in the Faith and in the Divine Mysteries.

From the Letter of the Athonite Fathers to Emperor Michael Paleologus, against John Beccus, who was Patriarch of Constantinople at that time, and who had not yet been deposed by a Council. John Beccus held the Patriarchical throne from 1275 to 1282 having been installed by Emperor Michael Paleologus, VIII in order to implement the Council of Lyons (1274). As a Uniate Patriarch, he is remembered chiefly for the many persecutions and deaths he inflicted upon the Orthodox faithful. [These Fathers of the Holy Mountain who signed the above Letter a little later sealed it with the blood of their martyrdom.]

In July of 1274, the Byzantine Emperor Michael VIII accepted a union with the Roman Church at Lyons, France. Faced with dangers from Charles of Anjou, the Ottoman Turks, and other enemies, the emperor found such an alliance with Rome expedient. The Union of Lyons required the Orthodox to recognize the authority of the Pope, the use of the Filioque in the Creed, and the use of azymes (unleavened bread) in the Liturgy. Patriarch Joseph was deposed because he would not agree to these conditions. The monastic clergy and many of the laity, both at home and in other Orthodox countries, vigorously opposed the Union, denouncing the emperor for his political schemes and for his betrayal of Orthodoxy.

On January 9, 1275 a Liturgy was celebrated in Constantinople in which the Pope was commemorated as "Gregory, the chief pontiff of the Apostolic Church, and Ecumenical Pope." The emperor's sister remarked, "It is better that my brother's empire should perish, rather than the purity of the Orthodox Faith." Recalling the infamous Crusade of 1204 when Latin crusaders sacked Constantinople, many of the people also preferred to submit to the infidels than to abandon the Orthodox Faith.

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Twenty-six martyrs of Zographou Monastery on Mt. Athos were among those who were persecuted by Emperor Michael VIII Paleologus (1261-1282) and Patriarch John Beccus (1275-1282) because they would not obey the imperial command to recognize the Union of Lyons. They steadfastly kept the teachings of the Fathers of the Church, and fearlessly censured those who accepted Catholic doctrines.

When the authorities came to Mt. Athos to enforce the imperial policy, the monks of Zographou shut themselves up in their monastery. From the tower they reproached those in favor of the Union, calling them lawless men and heretics. The attackers set the monastery on fire and burned the twenty-six martyrs alive.

The names of the martyrs are: Igumen Thomas, the monks Barsanuphius, Cyril, Micah, Simon, Hilarion, James, Job, Cyprian, Sava, James, Martinian, Cosmas, Sergius, Menas, Joasaph, Joannicius, Paul, Anthony, Euthymius, Dometian, Parthenius, and four laymen who died with them.

The following is an excerpt from the Introduction to *The Synodicon of the Holy and Ecumenical Council for Orthodoxy* and *The Synodicon of the Holy Spirit* (*The True Vine* Issue Numbers 27 & 28, Spring 2000, pp. 18-23). This volume is available from THE TRUE VINE 1476 Centre Street, Roslindale MA 02131-1476 for \$4.00 plus \$3.00 shipping and handling.)

"One major subject not covered in the *Synodicon* (of Orthodoxy) is the *filioque*.¹ Although Saint Photius the Great (circa 820-February 6, 891) recognized it early as a great heresy and was its foremost polemicist, especially in his crowning labour, the *Mystagogia*, and although it was recognized as a "most wicked evil" by Patriarch Peter of Antioch in his correspondence with the Ecumenical Patriarch Michael Cerularius, the majority of the Orthodox had not been involved in this doctrinal dispute, especially because there had been no major missionary effort of the West to convert the Orthodox to the *filioque* heresy, and because communications were sporadic, usually only among merchants, diplomats, or high officials of Church and state. The faithful of the Church needed no convincing, there was no question in their minds or any possibility of dispute: the *filioque* was self-evidently heretical, and thus unacceptable.

¹ The Latin term, *filioque*, means "and the Spirit". This formulation is first found in the writings of Augustine, Bishop of Hippo Regius in North Africa. Its addition to the Nicene Creed was strongly advocated by Nicholas I, Pope of Rome, who contended with St. Photius the Great Patriarch of Constantinople (820-891). The Holy Fathers of the Second Ecumenical Council, which was held in Constantinople in 381, forbade any addition to the Symbol of Faith.

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After the capture of Constantinople by the Fourth Crusade,² the foreign conquerors constrained the Orthodox to join the Papal fold, attempting to justify their violence with proofs of the legitimacy of the *filioque*. Being politically and militarily weak, the Byzantine Empire in exile at Nicea could not defend the Orthodox against the depredations of the Latins, but the Church hastened to defend the souls of the faithful by instructing them with true doctrines and warning them in the *Synodicon of the Holy Spirit* of the heresy of the *filioque*. Written on the model of the *Synodicon of Orthodoxy*, this newer *Synodicon* exhaustively elucidates the question of the *filioque* and expounds true Orthodox doctrine. John Eugenicus the Nomophylax, brother of Saint Mark Eugenicus, states in his Refutation of the Council of Florence that Saint Germanus the New³ wrote the *Synodicon of the Holy Spirit*. John's witness must be considered reliable since he had access to the Imperial Archives and Patriarchical Archives of Constantinople before their destruction in the Turkish conquest. The final section of the *Synodicon* which condemns the writings of John Beccus,⁴ who attempted to enforce the decisions of the Council of Lyons⁵ which subjugated the Orthodox Church to the Papacy and accepted the Latin theology of the *filioque*, was apparently added later by a different hand. It would indicate that this *Synodicon* had up to that time been read publicly on the Day of the Holy Spirit as prescribed (even though the custom has not endured to our day) and had enjoyed a considerable authority, which was used to lend weight to the condemnation of John Beccus. We have appended the *Synodicon of the Holy Spirit* in order to supplement the deficiency in the *Synodicon of Orthodoxy* concerning the *filioque*. A patristic admonishment on this subject is vitally necessary in our day, for too often one hears "Orthodox" ecumenists saying that the *filioque* has never been condemned or that it is a *theologoumenon*⁶. Such brazen prevarication

² 1024

³ Ecumenical Patriarch (1222-40) in Nicea.

⁴ Ecumenical Patriarch 1275-82. He is not considered to be legitimately elected and part of the true succession, since he was a Uniate patriarch.

⁵ 1274

⁶ A *theologoumenon* (pl. *theologoumena*), from the Greek word θεολογουμένοι, is the belief or explication of one or more Fathers upon a spiritual matter which is not clearly articulated in the Scriptures or formulated in Church dogma. It is a respected belief not contrary to Church dogma and usually accepted, but not one that everyone must subscribe to in order to be saved. The Church dogmatizes with reluctance, and only when the Faith itself is in danger; for the mystery of God and of His creation and economy cannot be circumscribed and defined in words, but only indicated; the dogma transcends its expression. A *theologoumenon* deals with spiritual verities of which the expression or explanation is not clearly defined and fixed because they are not yet fully revealed or are beyond our capacity, e.g., the state of the souls of the dead, and the life of the Kingdom. in a different capacity are "theological opinions: (*theologikai gnōmai*), which are human

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is immediately dispelled and shown for the lie that it is by both this *Synodicon* and all other synodical and patristic pronouncements which condemn both the theology of the *filioque* and its uncanonical addition to the Creed...

The shamelessness of the “Orthodox” ecumenists is not limited to the subject of the *filioque*. Ostensibly they accept and acknowledge all the decisions of the councils concerning doctrine, but in practice they are often heard saying that this or that denomination or such-and-such a belief has never been condemned by a council or that a council must be summoned in order to decide whether one can call a new group or teaching heretical. They imply by such statements that one may believe what one likes or come to a compromise on various doctrines, or that some denominations can be accepted as being part of the Church of Christ. In short, they have accepted the Branch Theory.

Is it necessary for a council to be called to discuss each new instance of heresy? The answer has been given definitively by the First and Second Council of Constantinople in its fifteenth canon⁷ which ordains that the Orthodox should separate themselves from any patriarch, archbishop, metropolitan, bishop, or presbyter teaching heresy and not wait until he has been condemned by a council. The Orthodox Church has of old considered this question and arrived at her God-inspired decision. For the faithful Orthodox Christian, there is no problem or question in this matter.

If no council need be summoned, have all the present-day heresies been diagnosed and condemned? Although not by the name of the denomination, every present day heresy certainly has one or more of its beliefs condemned in the two *Synodicons* published herein. First of all, almost every Protestant group can be included among those who do not worship the holy icons (see the anathemas on pp. 44-46), or who do not accept the miracles of the Saviour and the Saints (see the anathema on p. 48), or who do not believe in the reality of the Holy Mysteries (see anathemas on pp. 52 and 54). The Monophysites are condemned in doctrine (see anathema, p. 56) and by name (in the anathemas on

attempts to find answers in the Scriptures and the Fathers for certain questions which are debatable and subject to theological inquiry.

⁷ “But as for those who on account of some heresy condemned by Holy Synods or Fathers sever themselves from communion with their president, *i.e.*, because he publicly preaches heresy and with bared head teaches it in the Church, such persons are not subject to canonical penalty for walling themselves from communion from the so-called bishop before synodical clarification, but they shall be deemed worthy of due honour among the Orthodox. For not bishops, but false bishops and teachers have they condemned, and they have not fragmented the Church’s unity with schism, but from schisms and divisions have they earnestly sought to deliver the Church.” (Canon XV of the First and Second Council of Constantinople, 861 [often called the Council of St. Sophia]).

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pp. 70-71). The Papists are condemned in the chapters against Barlaam and Acindynus concerning created grace (see p. 63 *et. seq.*) and the chapters concerning the introduction of pagan philosophy into theology (see pp. 47-50). Finally, there is the general anathema on page 42 which condemns all innovation and everything enacted outside of the Church tradition and institution of the Holy Fathers, under which anathema come all the modernists and ecumenist "Orthodox"; moreover, in the Synodicon of the Holy Spirit, the Papists and the Protestants who sprang from them are condemned because they hold to the *filioque*. At times, some Protestants, notably Anglicans, are willing to delete the *filioque* addition from the Creed, but they are not willing to abandon its theology.

Hearing the "Orthodox" Ecumenists make the irresponsible statements noted above, one can only surmise that these statements spring either from a vast ignorance, an ignorance surpassed only by an arrogance that would make theological pronouncements when there is not even a superficial knowledge of the matter, or from an abyss of falsehood, since we have seen that only a bare-faced lie could explain the statement that the *filioque* and other modern heresies were never condemned. The first position ignores the Scriptures, Fathers, Councils, and Canons, while the second knows but does not honour them. Undoubtedly, both positions consider them to be irrelevant, unimportant, or erroneous; both commit blasphemy against the Holy Spirit, for they do not discern the operation of the Holy Spirit in the Saints and in the Church.

Whenever the modernists and the "Orthodox" Ecumenists say such things as, "The Fathers spoke only for their times, and they have little relevance for today", "The Fathers were only men, and since we are also men, we have every right to change their canons and definitions, which, after all, are only human opinion"; they spurn their Fathers and forebears in the Spirit and attack the Church of those who have won their crowns and gained glory from God and stand with boldness in His presence. Such pronouncements, with many variations, are often heard from these latter-day enemies of Orthodoxy. But when they call the inspiration and workings of the Holy Spirit the actions of men, is it not the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit described by our Lord in the Scriptures? Is it not also blasphemy against the Spirit to close our eyes and to refuse to acknowledge what is so plainly stated by our Fathers? Voluntary spiritual blindness is truly the unforgivable sin, for the Lord said, "They seeing, see not; and hearing, they hear not, neither do they understand. And in them is fulfilled the prophecy of Esaias, which saith, 'By hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and shall not perceive; for this people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes have closed; lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should

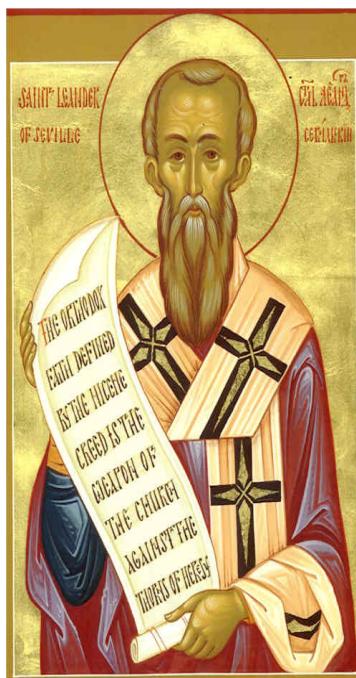
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heal them.”⁸ The pinnacle of their sin and that which seals their condemnation is that they presume to teach and to lead others to perdition. “And some of the Pharisees which were with Him heard these words and said unto Him, ‘Are we blind also?’ Jesus said unto them, ‘If ye were blind, ye would have no sin; but now ye say, “we see”; therefore your sin remaineth.’”⁹

The *Synodicon of Orthodoxy* and *Synodicon on the Holy Spirit* are a great heritage to the Church from our holy Fathers. Their true-born children receive it and treasure it, since it is their guide in the confusion of the wisdom of this world, a light in the darkness of heresy, and a discerning counsellor in the worldly debates over the Faith. They who treasure and heed the *Synodicons* in every particular are truly sons of faith and light, sons of the one Church of Christ.”

One further note might help our readers:

“Of particular interest to Orthodox is the *filioque*. The Lutheran convert to Orthodoxy, Adam Zernicavius, in his *Tractatus de processione Spiritus Sancti* (written in Latin) 1795-1796; ...uncovered numerous forgeries in the writings of the Fathers.” *Once delivered to the Saints: An Orthodox Apology for the New Millennium* by Father Michael Azkoul © 2000 Saint Nectarios Press p. 44 n.25 .



**Saint Leander of Cordova
Whom the Holy Church Commemorates May 13**

⁸ Matt. 13:13-15; Esaias 69-10.

⁹ John 9:40-41.